

VZCZCXRO0096
PP RUEHDBU
DE RUEHTA #1457/01 1110416
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 210416Z APR 06
FM AMEMBASSY ALMATY
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5023
INFO RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 1854
RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 6959
RUEHKB/AMEMBASSY BAKU 0669
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1256
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 7520
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 1698
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 1218
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT 7486
RUEHSI/AMEMBASSY TBILISI 2199
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ALMATY 001457

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EB/ESC; SCA/PO (MANN); SCA/CEN (MUDGE)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/19/2015

TAGS: [KZ](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: A/S BOUCHER DISCUSSES DEMOCRATIZATION
COMMISSION WITH POLITICAL OPPOSITION

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOHN ORDWAY FOR REASONS 1.4(B) and (D)

11. (C) Summary: A/S Boucher discussed ways to improve Kazakhstan's "Democratization Commission" with opposition political leaders April 8 in Almaty. The political leaders lobbied for an OSCE role -- perhaps in helping set the DC agenda -- and for increased opposition representation. The politicians also argued a Western satellite news network is needed in the region to counter Russia's current, anti-democratic news monopoly. The opposition leaders spoke forcefully about the February murder of opposition leader Altynbek Sarsenbaiuly, which they characterized as one in a string of recent "political murders." The intra-elite struggle for power which the murder had exposed, they claimed, was indicative of the inherent instability of Nazarbayev's "authoritarian" power structure. For his part, A/S Boucher explained that, while the U.S. maintained a broad relationship with Kazakhstan, based on many interests, the USG intended to make sure that progress in democracy did not "lag behind" other areas of development. End Summary.

12. (SBU) Meeting Participants: SCA A/S Richard Boucher, Senior Advisor Caitlin Hayden, Ambassador Ordway, USAID Democracy Officer Sean Roberts, Energy Officer Jim Loveland (Notetaker), Tolegen Zhukeyev (For a Just Kazakhstan), Galymzhan Zhakiyanov (For a Just Kazakhstan), Bulat Abilov (For a Just Kazakhstan and True Ak Zhol), and Alikhan Baymenov (Ak Zhol).

Analyzing the Sarsenbaiuly Murder

13. (C) Side-stepping A/S Boucher's opening question about what the U.S. could do to encourage further democratization, the opposition leaders spoke harshly and emotionally about the February murder of opposition leader Altynbek Sarsenbaiuly. Abilov began by stating that Sarsenbaiuly's murder was the result of Nazarbayev's "absolute authority," though other factors had contributed: underdevelopment, Kazakhstan's energy resources, and "maybe even your country turning a blind eye." Known for highly-emotional statements, Abilov argued that Sarsenbaiuly's murder had exposed a weakness that should trouble the U.S. If Nazarbayev dies without a system in place for the legitimate transfer of power, he argued, "a lot of people will die." Nazarbayev's family and the oligarchs will fight for power, he continued,

regional conflicts will ensue, and "everything will go to hell." Zhakayev expressed the idea in different words: the authoritarian system is getting stronger, he said, and if Nazarbayev gets weaker, "we'll have a disaster."

¶4. (C) In his turn, Zhakiyanov described recent events as a "three-month campaign of political murder." Since recently ending his 3.5-year term in prison, he said he had received confirmation that orders had been passed to prison administrators to kill him as well. Turning to A/S Boucher's original question, he placed responsibility on the opposition to educate society about the fact that Kazakhstan's shortcomings -- corruption, low living standards, divisions, and a nontransparent economy -- were related to a lack of democracy.

Improving the Democracy Commission

¶5. (C) Tolegen Zhukeyev raised the issue of the Democracy Commission (DC), explaining that, in declining to participate thus far, the opposition was holding out for a genuine "dialogue," not a "one-sided monologue." As currently constituted, he said, the opposition is outrepresented on the Commission by "thirty to three," giving those loyal to Nazarbayev the opportunity to stage a "one-sided dialogue" and then vote whatever result they wished. One solution, he said, would be to establish an intermediary -- possibly the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) -- between the opposition and Nazarbayev.

¶6. (C) A/S Boucher asked if a reformed Democratization Commission -- one which included greater opposition

ALMATY 00001457 002 OF 003

representation and a role for the OSCE, perhaps as rule-maker and agenda-setter -- would be better than another formulation, such as a direct dialogue between the opposition and Nazarbayev. The opposition leaders expressed immediate interest: a Commission with ten opposition representatives and OSCE involvement in agenda-setting, Zhukeyev said, would be "a good approach."

¶7. (C) Baimenov, who attended the first Commission meeting and publicly stated he found it wanting, agreed that involving the OSCE was a good idea. However, he added, if the President wants a "national dialogue," that dialogue could not be limited solely to the Democratization Commission -- access to the media was important, too. Even the Commission itself was not given adequate media coverage, he noted, suggesting that the sessions should be broadcast "live," or a television channel should be devoted to producing a regular "national dialogue" show. Finally, he said, the Democratization Commission should hold meetings at various locations outside the capital, as had originally been conceived.

Setting Up a Satellite News Network

¶8. (SBU) Speaking of ways to promote democracy in Kazakhstan, Abilov pointed to the region's need for a Western satellite television network -- like "EuroNews," he said, but in Russian. Baimenov agreed: Russia has a monopoly on CIS information, he said, and, as a consequence, "we perceive the world as Russia is perceiving it." Abilov noted the harm caused Kazakhstan's democratic movement by the fact that events in Ukraine, Krygystan, and Georgia were all seen through the official Russian lens. "You turn on the TV," he said, "and all you things you see about those countries are their problems."

Giving Policy Advice

¶9. (C) The political leaders were outspoken in their critique

of U.S. policy. "We don't understand your Kazakhstan policy," Abilov stated. The opposition had expected Secretary Rice to deliver a "clear message" to the ruling authorities when she visited in October 2005, he said, "but we never heard it." Baymenov recommended that the U.S. take advantage of a "clear opportunity" to impose conditions on Kazakhstan's bid to chair the OSCE. In general, he added, the U.S. should not offer Kazakhstan non-conditional support based solely on Kazakhstan's cooperation in the "War on Terror."

¶10. (C) A/S Boucher reminded the men that, during her October visit, Secretary Rice had clearly stated that, "without democracy, there is no stability." As for the rest of the political leaders' message, A/S Boucher said, "I agree with almost everything you say." However, he said, it was important to understand that the U.S. could have a broad relationship with Kazakhstan, while at the same time encouraging democratic change. The U.S. would not, however, get to the point of withholding everything else in order to get progress in democracy. A/S Boucher concluded by remarking that he appreciated his interlocutors' message that progress in any area -- be it the economy, the growth of institutions, or stability -- was tied to democracy. "Our goal," he said, "is to make sure that democracy does not lag behind."

¶11. (C) After the meeting, Abilov complained to A/S Boucher about the opposition's "lack of contact" with the FBI regarding the Sarsenbaiuly murder investigation. We have things to say, he argued, and the fact that the FBI doesn't talk to us discredits the FBI. Ambassador Ordway explained to Abilov that the FBI was participating in the Kazakhstani government's investigation, not leading it. The time will come, he said, when the FBI will express its opinions and conclusions. If you have information relevant to the investigation, he offered, "we might be able to arrange a one-way conversation."

ALMATY 00001457 003 OF 003

¶12. (U) A/S Boucher has cleared this cable.
ORDWAY